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Project aims to keep trash out of LA river

By Phillip Zonkel Staff Writer

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LONG BEACH - Shopping carts, tires or furniture floating down the Los Angeles River and into the San Pedro Bay could be a thing of the past.

A major environmental project to help 16 cities capture tons of their trash before it enters the Los Angeles River moved forward when a regional authority awarded a \$5 million contract funded with federal stimulus monies Thursday.

The contract will fund the installation of approximately 12,000 trash-collection devices known as catch basin inserts into storm drains, under the contract awarded by the LA Gateway Region Integrated Regional Water Management Authority (LA Gateway Authority).

One insert will be installed inside each publicly held storm drain that leads to the Los Angeles River in all of the 16 Gateway Cities.

In addition, approximately \$4 million will be available for cities to install curb-level screens to prevent debris from entering

storm drains, and also enable the debris to be collected by street-sweeping equipment.

"For many years, our beaches and coastal water quality have suffered," said Mayor Bob Foster. "This project will help reduce the amount of trash that ends up on the Long Beach shoreline. I look forward to the swift implementation of this project."

The city of Long Beach has successfully installed hundreds of inserts, screens and even sponge filters already using other funding sources, proving that the technology works and can be easily implemented, Long Beach officials said.

In an average year, the city of Long Beach picks up more than 3,000 tons of trash and other debris deposited on its beaches by the Los Angeles River.

The project, known as the Gateway Drain Catch Basin Retrofit Project, should begin in December and take nine to

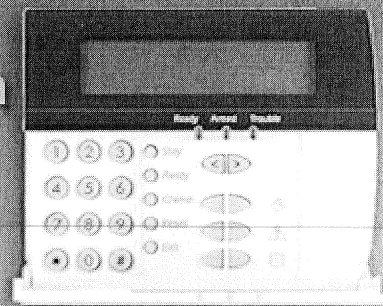
12 months to complete, said Matthew Veeh, spokesman with the Long Beach Water Department.

Officials say the contract could create approximately 200 jobs.

The project will assist the cities in complying with the Los Angeles Regional Water Quality

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The Gateway Cities include Bell, Bell Gardens, Commerce, Compton, Cudahy, Downey, Huntington Park, Long Beach, Lynwood, Maywood, Montebello, Paramount, Pico Rivera, Signal Hill, South Gate and Vernon.

The project was funded by a \$10 million federal grant of stimulus money. The Gateway IRWM was awarded the money by the State Water Resources Control Board.

Because the project will be completed with half the funds it received, any remaining funds will be made available on an agreed upon pro-rated basis to Gateway Cities that want to install automatic retractable screens in addition to the connector pipe screens installed in all of the storm drains.

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